

Let's party!

The reason for *other kinds of parties* can be as varied as a person's imagination: birthdays, pre-weddings, anniversaries, graduation, church-related observances such as a child's First Communion, and others, in addition to parties marking the main holidays. *Slumber parties* are held by groups of girls. All the girls in a particular social group go to one girl's house to spend the night (usually sleeping on the living room floor). They listen to popular music, eat junk food, chat, and try to stay awake as long as possible. An unofficial requirement for some successful slumber parties is that boys of the same age try to 'crash' the party, knocking on the doors and

windows and trying to enter the house late at night. The purpose is either to scare or to thrill the girls (depending on their age!).

While slumber parties are most popular for older children and young teens, age doesn't have to be a restriction. The brothers and sisters (and their spouses) in at least one American family have occasional slumber parties – and all the participants are in their 80s! It just proves that, while traditional observations and celebrations are observed by Americans, at any moment they aren't afraid to create their own new and unusual ones, either.

An American snapshot



Mom and son, Lynne DeMichele and Rob Dalton have established their own family tradition – an annual poetry weekend.

I'm a writer, like my mother. I work in advertising to pay the bills, but my passion lies in poetry and songwriting. My mom is retired, but in her career she used language to get people to think about important issues. Once a year, we go on a mother-and-son retreat to Orcas, an island northwest of Seattle, Washington.

Our yearly retreat is a quiet celebration, because we both get a rest from the demands of day-to-day life. We spend the long weekend talking about art – books

we've read, powerful movies, ideas we've encountered that in some way changed the way we look at the world. We build fires by the shore and over a bottle of wine we watch the sun set. We scribble thoughts in our notebooks.

It usually takes me a full day to get my brain free, but then the stillness of the sea calms my mind, and one by one poems bubble to the surface and I write them down. My mom prefers crafting short stories about her childhood home, but she too writes the occasional poem. I'm lucky: my mom is one of my best friends, and once a year we steal away to indulge in our mutual love of language.

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¹ <http://www.census.gov/>

² *ibid*

³ <http://www.state.nj.us>

Note

Menundo – spicy Mexican soup made from cow's or sheep's stomach (p. 70)

Folklorico – Mexican folk dancing (p. 70)

Mariachi – traditional Mexican dance music, often played by a small band of strolling musicians in traditional costumes (p. 70)

Tejano – Mexican-American pop music, often combining accordion, synthesizers, and rock styles, and blending polka with traditional Mexican music (p. 70)

on the spot – in this case, immediately and right at the location (p. 75)

First Communion (Catholic religious ceremony) – the ceremony where for their first time children receive bread and wine commemorating the last meal of Jesus Christ (p. 76)

to steal away – to quietly escape (p. 76)

mutual love of – a great enjoyment shared by two friends (or others) for the same topic (p. 76)

Compare

- 1 What kinds of holidays are celebrated in your country? Are 'American' holidays such as Valentine's Day and Halloween becoming better known in your country?
- 2 Which of your holidays do you think could become popular in the US, if people learned more about them?
- 3 What kinds of celebrations do you observe concerning the coming of spring or another season?
- 4 If you could declare a 'national day' or 'national month' for your country's history, national industry, or a local organization, what would it be?
- 5 What are the advantages and disadvantages of having religious holidays like those in the state of New Jersey? How many holy days are celebrated in your country?
- 6 Which of these American traditions – picnics, block parties, slumber parties – are (or could be) popular in your country?